

'HOUSE AS A PLACE OF DWELLING VERSUS BASE FOR LIVELIHOOD'

THE IMPACT OF HOME BASED WORK ON THE SOCIO-SPATIAL VALUE OF
URBAN DWELLINGS,
AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON HOUSE DESIGNING IN FUTURE.

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A Dissertation submitted to the
Department of Architecture,
University of Moratuwa,
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science
In
Architecture.

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University of Moratuwa

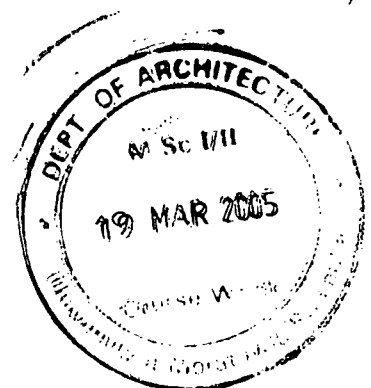
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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgements are made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

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Miss. Hiranthi Pathirana..... *H. Pathirana*

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Abstract.

'Home' has a special bond with its dwellers and also it is a fundamental necessity of every human being. Where it acts as 'own' place and provides 'shelter'. The bond between the home and the dweller is strong as it protects privacy, enhances mental satisfaction, and provides relaxation from the man's busy life pattern. Dwellers become highly attached to it and it becomes a part of their life.

Before rampant urbanization because of the availability of adequate space and clear demarcation from other activities, did not hinder the concept of 'home' as a place of dwelling. The purpose of a 'house' (the physical place) as a 'home' (beyond the physicality - including all the relationships) was clearly defined as the place where the 'family' - the smallest social group of the society dwelled.

But today, in urban situations a certain category of urban dwellers are unsatisfied with the economic conditions of their lives. The high land values and strategic locations in urban tight places provide a good potential to be exploited economically. With the acceleration of the development, economic situations need to be strengthened more so in the future than today, to survive in an urban context. Hence most people conduct many economic activities in their living environment HBW (home based work) in order to improve their economy. This gives a commercial façade to living and home environment. And also it is a threat for their 'homes' as traditionally defined and their home environment. It could be identified that because of this phenomenon occupants have done various changes, modifications, adaptation to their houses. Simultaneously the living pattern, the life style changed and as a result social and spatial conflicts arose. Therefore this issue will become more critical in the future.

In future within the development of the world, will home become more than living? Because of the multiple use of the home environment, what will happen to their living environment? Could people dwell with privacy as before, while being involved in the commercial activities within the home? As the interaction with outsiders increase, could they maintain their home environment as before?

Should the loss of 'home' be allowed for such urban dwellers or would it be possible to design original home with flexibility and a possibility of modifying without affecting peoples privacy and security. To do so what are the aspects needed to be considered? This should be considered as a positive developing phenomenon in the world. Thus it is a responsibility of the designer to think deeply on the present economic trend and to adapt new design criteria for designing such houses in the future which would help both dwelling versus commercial activities to function without a conflict.



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That people could come into the world in a place they could not at first even name and had never known before; and that out of a nameless and unknown place they could grow and move around in it until its name they knew and called with love, and call it HOME, and put roots there and love others there; so that whenever they left this place they would sing homesick songs about it and write poems of yearning for it...and forever be returning to it or leaving it again!



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-William Goyen, *The House of Breath.*
House as a Mirror of Self.

There should be at least one room, or some corner, where no one will find you and disturb you or notice you. You should be able to untether yourself from the world and set your self free, loosing all the fine strings and strands of tension that bind you, by sight, by sound, by thought, to the presence of other men.

-Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation.*
House as a Mirror of Self.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction.

It is important to improve a persons private life, which reflects living standards and ensure the quality of living. We could identify that, Home as the most fundamental necessity which holds a human's private life. People are tightly attached to their private dwellings and they have a tendency to personalize them even under highly restricted conditions. As the human mind demands a certain amount of 'privacy' while defining his own territoriality; a personal space, which he is attached to. It is a physical and psychological need of the human mind; and needs to be maintained throughout the life time.

Though man could identify as a being, which has a tendency to form groups and live in groups within shared places (being a member of several groups), he also has a need for highly personalized spaces. Home is such a prime place for him to relax and reflect on his inner soul.



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But today a house serves not only physical and psychological needs of dwelling, but it is also expected to satisfy the social and economic aspects too. Considering social factors today man tries to maintain his power, status through the home. Official connections are invited to the home. Therefore economy has become the main determining factor of a personal life pattern. It adds a new dimension to the home. As a result this home based work brought into the home has given a commercial façade to dwellings

In Home based work (HBW) during the daytime dwellers are involved in the interplay of 'domestic' and 'working' activities within the 'same physical boundary'. This situation basically arises in the urban situation where people's lives become a struggle within tight spaces.

In order to generate some extra income to fulfill their living requirements people tend to conduct HBW all over the world. In recent years, it has expanded rapidly and it is the source of livelihood for one third of the urban economically active population in the third world. This development trend needs to be considered as a positive aspect in living patterns in the future, and it is an issue for designers to consider on how to maintain the homely atmosphere in homes while including the commercial environment.

Observation.

When considering the ancient life pattern, Sri Lanka had an agro based social system where people were satisfied with their day to day simple needs. They were inter-dependent on each other and as soon as they needed aid to carry out any work it was done with the help of the collective community. Thus they had strong connections with the neighborhood community, and their houses always consisted of an inviting, human friendly environment. There was enough space to gather as a community. They had a more relaxed life and their homes always supported their lifestyles.

With passing of time, this self sustained agro-based society changed. Gradually society became more industrialized, and urbanized according to the development. With the free economy system people became more independent and they searched for means to satisfy there ever increasing needs and wants. Therefore the interdependent lifestyle was gradually replaced by a monetary based competitive and complicated life style. The caste based employment system disappeared and employment was determined by the level of knowledge and skills. It simply meant any person could participate in the growth of the development of country from the means of the employment and education. Along with these changes various income levels such as upper, middle and lower came into existence. Within these aspects various changes arrived to the social structure, and the caste no longer defined the way of living.

With a more complicated life style people were unsatisfied by the monthly income and they don't depend on it solely. A majority of people from the middle income group of the society suffer from this situation. This is a reason for the appearance of HBW (Home Based Work) into the domestic environment-to earn additional income. This is a reason for the loss of normal day to day relaxing environment from the home. Home is not mere living at all because it become much more than that, in urban context the dwellers share the tight space for living as well as working.

Today this becomes a very complex exercise and HBW is not simple domestic work any more. It consists of complicated working places. It is either a family operation or outside work organizational unit, of production generating working plants. It has no hard and fast rules for managing the organization. It can be operated in small scale and does not need skilled labor or large capital. The activities are irregular and mostly carried out in an informal manner. Therefore lower and middle income people can handle these activities easily. They use there home as a permanent place for these activities. The government has accepted this production process as it generates self employment as well as income to the operator. Indirectly this fulfills certain political and economical aspiration of the government.

Criticality.

House is the most personal space for any human being. As it supports his identity, privacy and demarcates his own territoriality while sharing it with the smallest social group-the family. But according to social and economic changes the concept of the home has changed. Economy has become a primary determining factor for house designing. It can be observed that people are increasingly sacrificing their domestic life to fulfill economic needs. The present day version of house is not only a home, as it can provide for needs other than warmth of the relationships among family members and shelter for its occupants. The criticality is not only losing homely environment, but this situation leads to many problems in future planning and designing and town development in the country.

Problems arise when the house which has been designed solely for the purpose of dwelling not being able to fulfill the opportunity for the user to make the required environment for two different activities. It means there is a conflict between two functions. Without identifying this situation commercial activity can not be successfully integrated into 'home', as working and living are two different patterns of activities which need two different spaces.

In order to maintain commercial activities within their living environment people have made various changes, modifications and adaptations to their houses. This has led to a conflict in 'social' and 'spatial' composition of the house. This happens mostly in urban houses as these are situated in close proximity to main roads, commercial centers and the more public places in towns. This situation becomes more crucial due to the rigid type plans and the lack of space available. But home based work cannot be avoided as the people hold the view that need of such additional income is more pressing than preserving the home environment. Though the situation leads to physical discomfort in the home environment the extra income provides a certain mental satisfaction for them.

Intention of study.

The study is focused on, the trend in future to develop the concept of the home, as a place of living as well as the base of livelihood. These two contrary forces will greatly influence the home environment in urban areas. This problem is crucial, and professional intervention is essential and this aspect should be given serious thought and handled properly.

Therefore to consider this as a determining factor which shapes housing design, the prevailing situation should be understood properly in order to understand the magnitude of the issue. Different types of homes which have commercial activities connected to the living environment, different types of home based activities, the scale of the activity, the spatial usage; the spatial problems related to the HBEAs should be examined.

The study will be carried out regarding the first layer of the Colombo – Kandy/ Kurunegala road and houses around Moratuwa area, where those have the potential to invite commercial activities into living environment is much greater. First layer is defined as the immediate layer of houses juxtaposition the urban streets. The social and spatial conflict regarding the situation will be given a serious thought, and the impact of the situation will be surveyed regarding the relationships of dwellers, their behavior pattern, conflicts regarding their personal places or objects and satisfaction etc.

Scope and limitations.

With the changing trend of living with urbanity, the use of a house as an economic base is not only limited to one income category of the society. The increasing tendency for having home based economic activities can be found in any income categories, though the type or scale of the activity may vary from one group to another.

But it can be clearly observed that the HBEAs are very commonly found in the middle income category. The major reason for that may be values and aspirations such as upward social mobility. Within the middle income category itself this tendency is stronger among the 'lower-middle' and 'middle-middle' income earners with tight housing along the main streets. Therefore this situation where the economic need is pressing and where the space is limited the 'confrontation' between the living and economy is much greater and clearer than that of an individual housing situation in suburban or rural contexts.

Therefore studying urban houses will facilitate in obtaining a clear picture of the prevailing situation and finally understanding the gravity of the problem. Therefore the study is limited to middle income housing near urban roads or urban areas, with the potential of inviting commercial activities in to home environment. Most of them are similar in nature; the type of the commercial activity may vary according to the potential of the place and the context. Field Research duration of the study is limited to two weeks as the lack of time duration available for the submission.

Method of study.

The prevailing situation must be observed to understand the nature of the activities and the socio-spatial conflict. For that the middle income housing in Sri Lanka was selected. This dissertation was based on an exploration survey conducted in housing developments in several locations along the Colombo-Kandy/ Kurunegala main road and in Moratuwa urban context. The two different contexts were chosen to get a comparative understanding about the issue.

A preliminary field survey was conducted initially to identify and get a general knowledge about the prevailing HBEA conducting situation. Subsequently the qualitative and quantitative information were collected by giving a set of questionnaires to the users. The questionnaires were changed slightly according to the specific dwelling situation and its usage. Additionally an observation survey will be conducted to record activity pattern within a time period of a day.



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Different HBEAs and there operational conditions were identified and those situations were analyzed and the different spatial usages and personal values regarding the spaces were identified while conducting the survey.

Then in each situation the prevailing spatial configurations with respect to the two different aspects, living versus economy are identified.

Key: HBW- Home Based work.

HBEAs- Home Based Economic Activities.

HBA- Home Based Activities.